

scale, to that they merely decorate the page rather than inform the reader. The panorama of King George Sound is well worth including, for example, but at least at twice the size. One page in the reviewer's copy was also badly stained.

Both Darwin and Captain Fitzroy formed a low opinion of the book sellers that they found in Australia. Perhaps, if their modern counter-

parts all stock the present volume, the ghosts of Darwin and Fitzroy might be somewhat appeased.

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### **A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals**

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British Museum (Natural History) 1987. ISBN 0-565-01050-6.

Pp. 208; RRP.: \$27.00 (paperback).

This most interesting volume attempts to explain the nature and origin of mammal domestication. The book has done so by cleverly integrating archaeological information with the products of the prolonged process of domestication that so control our lives today.

The book is introduced by a chapter entitled "Mans place in nature at the end of the ice age". Each of the five sections which follow are subdivided into a series of parts. Thus, section 1 "Man-made animals" has 9 parts; section 2 "Exploited captives" has five parts; section 3 "Small mammals" has 2 parts; section 4 "Exploited ungulates in the pre-Neolithic period" has 1 part as does section 5, "Experimental domestication and game ranching past and present". The conclusions "The geography of domestication" rounds off what is a competently and well-written book.

The volume abounds with illustrations and these take the form of colour photographs (25), black and white photographs (47), line drawings (99) and maps (12). These are well chosen, ideally spaced and impart a simple message in concise format.

The appendices at the end of the book includes a section on the nomenclature of the domestic mammals. This consists of a table defining the taxonomic binomials of domestic mammals and their presumed wild parent species as used in the book (appendix 1). A second appendix includes information on climatic sequences and archaeological divisions of the Quaternary period. Both of these are valuable additions, however, appendix 1 provides us with the first of two criticisms which I wish to make.

Firstly, the author argues that "the now widely accepted premise that names based on descriptions of domestic mammals should not be used for wild species whilst at the same time keeping as close as possible to the traditional nomenclature" (p. 195) should be followed. That is, using the next available name to describe the wild taxa. To me this is a misuse of binomial nomenclature. Scientific names serve two functions, inthat they provide a means of readily distinguishing taxa and they also provide stability for the commonality of names. Many situations exist where names in common usage have been retained

despite their nomenclatorial inexactness. Nevertheless, the author cites as an example of inappropriate nomenclature the domestic water buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* (L). She then assigns as its progenitor the "wild" water buffalo *Bubalus arnee* (Kerr, 1792), even though this species is morphologically indistinguishable from *B. bubalis* and fertile hybrids are formed between the forms. There is no evidence whatsoever to say that *Bubalus arnee* is the wild progenitor to *B. bubalis*, yet this appears to have been assumed by the author. How can *B. arnee* be a progenitor, if it is a separate species? One might expect that progenitors of domesticated stock would be of the same species. The resurrection of this name from taxonomic history can add nothing but confusion to the literature and the nomenclature. *Bubalis arnee* is not a name accepted by taxonomists and it has in the past been placed under the synonymy of *B. bubalis*. For example, the consensus taxonomy of mammals developed in "Mammal species of the world" (Honacki et. al. 1982) does not recognise *B. arnee*. Unfortunately, the author applies such terminology throughout the volume in regard to numerous species.

Secondly, there appears to be a somewhat arbitrary nature in assigning species to either "Man-made animals" or "Exploited captives". Thus, dogs are assigned to the former, whereas cats are assigned to the latter. This decision appears to have been reached on the assumption that many diverse forms of dogs have been created by man's breeding activi-

ties, whereas this does not apply so well to cats. Examining some of the more bizarre feline exhibits at a local agricultural show (comparing for example the Russian Blue and the Cornish Rex), suggests that as high a level of genetic manipulation pertains to cats as it does to dogs. The second justification appears to be that house cats can re-adapt to the wild much easier than can dogs and they therefore use man as a convenience. This might be well and true for London, but if the author considers the packs of wild dogs which are found in some Italian cities, or a major problem to sheep farmers in Australia where domestic dogs have gone wild, the arbitrary nature of her decision is highlighted. The point is that many of the inclusions and omissions are arguable.

Nevertheless, despite several aspects which I found irritating, this volume is well put together and well worth reading.

#### REFERENCES

- Honacki, J.H., Kinman, K.E. and Koepl, J.W. 1982. *Mammal species of the world. A taxonomic and geographic reference*. Allen Press, Inc. and The Association of Systematics Collections: Lawrence, Kansas, U.S.A.

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